

Statement of Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren

H.J. Res. 114, Resolution Authorizing the Use of Military Force against Iraq

Mr. Speaker, should Congress authorize the President to use the armed forces of the United States to attack Iraq? The President is asking us to pass this resolution now, but he has not yet made the case for war. We are being asked to vote on a resolution that has serious implications for America and the world.

I cannot support the President's request that we authorize military force against Iraq. I make this very difficult decision for three important reasons: the United States is not acting in self-defense or from an imminent threat from Iraq, the United States should not be pursuing unilateral action without international support and the President has not stated an exit strategy. For these reasons, I cannot go to the people of California's 16th District and ask them to support this resolution.

I believe there are times when countries must resort to war. And, indeed, international law recognizes the right of nations to defend themselves. I strongly support our current campaign against terrorism. But are we voting this week on a case of self-defense? It would certainly be self-defense if Iraq supported the al Qaeda attack on September 11, 2001, but the evidence of such support is lacking.

I have listened to the Administration and met with many top officials. I have yet to see any credible evidence that Iraq is connected with al Qaeda. The experts readily admit that there is no real connection.

Some suggest that Iraq is such an imminent threat that America is justified in a unilateral attack. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice summed this position up by stating, "we don't want to find out he has nuclear weapons by seeing the mushroom cloud." But is our choice inspectors or invasion?

Based on all of the evidence available to me as a member of Congress, I don't see the evidence that there is a new imminent threat that would allow America to attack first under the "self defense" doctrine. In fact, if the case could be made against Iraq under the self-defense doctrine, I believe that case would have been made by this Administration. The President did not choose this strategy because it cannot be supported by evidence.

Does possession or intent to possess these weapons constitute an attack or imminent attack against the United States? The answer is no. Many countries possess weapons of mass destruction. We do not propose to attack North Korea today despite our concerns with the nature and intentions of that regime, so clearly some additional factor must be found beyond mere possession of such weapons.

I can believe that Iraq is a threat to the region and to some American interests overseas. But, I do not believe that the threat is imminent or must be handled with a unilateral military strike. The President is now choosing a new and dangerous policy called the America Strikes First Doctrine when he argues that we can attack anytime we feel threatened.

When we assert our right to intervene militarily whenever we think it is a good idea or we perceive a threat, we must assume other nations will do the same. We cannot credibly insist there is one rule of international behavior for the United States and a different rule for all other nations. Can India attack Pakistan for a perceived imminent threat? Or China invade Taiwan? We are entering dangerous territory with this new doctrine. We may be forced to use the incredible military might of the United States to deal with such developments in the new world where self-defense is not required as a precursor to military action. And when we do we will lack the moral high ground that the doctrine of self-defense provides. Is this country truly prepared for this new reality?

And what is our exit strategy? We have not heard from the Administration about what the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq will look like. Are we in this for the long haul? Do we plan to be in Iraq with people and dollars for the many years it will take to rebuild a peaceful and responsible Iraq? So far, this administration has not demonstrated a commitment to effectively running the economy of the United States—are we to believe that the American people will dig deep in their pockets for billions and billions each year to rebuild Iraq? The Administration's silence on what comes after the costly ground war is

telling. If our efforts to rebuild Afghanistan are an example, we have reason to worry.

With our own economy on the ropes, the President seems only to be focusing on Iraq. War with Iraq will not rebuild the economy of the United States. When the security of America is at stake, cost is no object. We will spend whatever is necessary in the defense of America. But when the effort is not self-defense, America will rightly ponder the inevitable costs of war.

I am the mother of a 17-year-old son. Maybe that's why I understand when mothers ask me about Iraq. A life lost to save America is a stinging pain that will always be with a Gold Star Mother - but the knowledge that the loss was necessary to protect the "home of the brave and the land of the free" gives both comfort and cause. Is America prepared to sacrifice lives when the cause is not to defend America but to start a war unilaterally without an imminent threat? I haven't heard the American people say so.

To deal with threats to the world community, nations have engaged in multinational military efforts sanctioned by the United Nations or NATO. The use of force to curtail military threats of rogue nations when done by a multinational basis and sanctioned by the U.N. or NATO has become recognized internationally as legitimate and within international community norms. This is the way responsible nations are supposed to act. I am very concerned about how other nations will view the United States when we invoke the America Strikes First doctrine. As of this moment, Great Britain is the only other nation dedicated to military action with us in Iraq. When even Canada is not prepared to march by our side, we have cause to pause and to reflect.

We would be having a far different debate had President Bush come to Congress leading the world community and the United Nations or NATO. The United States should be leading the world, working with the world community to resolve an international issue. We should be here, Mr. Speaker, debating a resolution because all other efforts have failed. Sadly, we are here discussing an end result, with no end game in mind.

I want America to lead the world in peaceful efforts around the globe. I want an America that will lead a skeptical United Nations to reinstate a weapons inspection program—backed by the use of force if Iraq does not comply. I want an America that has a coherent policy to deal with a post-Saddam Iraq.

This resolution is an unwise step for America that will, in the end, weaken America. We are at our best when we are first among allies standing tall for the free world. Let us be at our best when we deal with Iraq.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will not vote to authorize the President to carry out a unilateral and costly ground war against Iraq.

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Reporters note: Due to time constraints Rep. Lofgren will give an abridged version of these remarks on the House Floor today. This statement was submitted to the Congressional Record

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